

BLINDNESS IN EAST AFRICA

Sir Clutha Mackenzie

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AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.

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BRITISH
EMPIRE
SOCIETY
FOR THE
BLIND

BLINDNESS
IN
EAST AFRICA

Reports by
SIR CLUTHA MACKENZIE

Headquarters:

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LONDON,
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1953

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BRITISH EMPIRE SOCIETY FOR THE BLIND

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BLINDNESS IN EAST AFRICA

by

SIR CLUTHA MACKENZIE

with a Foreword by

Sir BERNARD REILLY, K.C.M.G., C.I.E., O.B.E.

(Chairman of the British Empire Society for the Blind)

1953

FOREWORD

Sir Clutha Mackenzie lost his sight when serving in Gallipoli in World War I. He has been associated with work for the blind ever since, first for St. Dunstan's in connection with the resettlement of blinded Australian soldiers. Later, he was for fifteen years Director of the New Zealand Institute for the Blind, and in this capacity dealt with the education, training and employment of the blind throughout the Dominion.

In 1943 he was appointed by the Government of India to advise on blind welfare in India, and in subsequent years he advised, *inter alia*, the Governments of Ceylon, Nepal, Malaya, Burma and Hong-Kong. From 1949 onwards he served U.N.E.S.C.O. as consultant on International Braille, and has visited Turkey on a United Nations mission to advise on blind welfare.

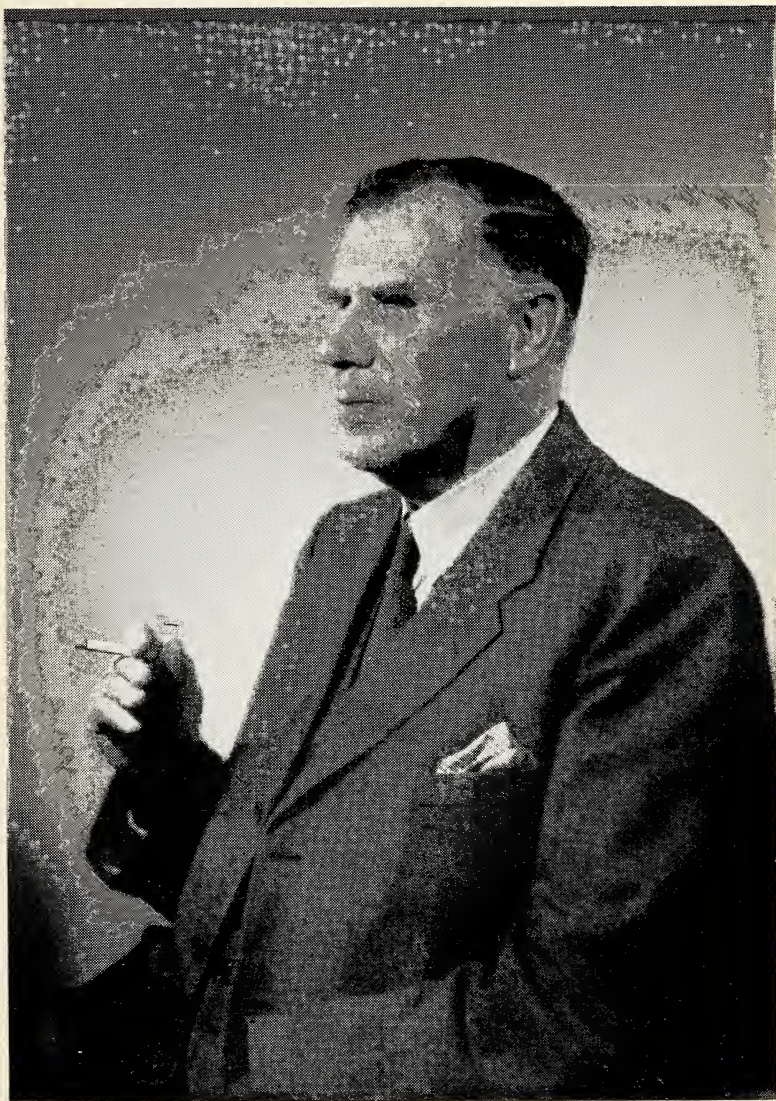
By reason of his ability and wide experience of men and countries, his recommendations on the best methods of building up East African services to the blind are particularly valuable. His two reports—the first dealing with the broad structure of work for the blind in East Africa, and the second summarising his recommendations for each of the four territories—have been received by the Society with warm appreciation of the work he has done, and all the recommendations are now being examined in detail. The reports are being published now, in order that the views expressed in them may be widely considered, and that the Society may, in its examination of the recommendations, have the benefit of the opinion of those in the Territories concerned, and also those interested in the welfare of the blind elsewhere.

BERNARD REILLY,

Chairman, British Empire Society for the Blind.

November, 1953.

Footnote: Further copies of Sir Clutha Mackenzie's Report may be obtained from the British Empire Society for the Blind, 53 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.



Sir Clutha Mackenzie

I. Inter-territorial Report

on the Development of Services to the Blind in the Four East African Territories

1. The Council of the British Empire Society for the Blind in London, after consulting the Colonial Office, the East African Governments and its Branch Committees, asked me to spend six months to do what I could in an advisory capacity to assist in building up East African organisations, in establishing practical working plans and in starting new, or expanding earlier, services.

2. The High Commission kindly attended to inter-territorial arrangements and met inter-territorial travel costs, while the individual Governments generously provided transport within their Territories. While most of my time was spent in Uganda, the broad lines of policy, the structures of the Territorial organisations and the main forms of training which I worked out there after detailed study of the African background, seem applicable, with necessary local adaptations, to each Territory. My itinerary was as follows:—

Kenya: April 16th; July 20/28th; and August 19/21st.

Uganda: April 17th to July 19th and August 22nd to Sept. 24th.

Zanzibar: July 29th to August 4th.

Tanganyika: August 5th to 19th.

POSITION AT THE OUTSET OF MY VISIT

Visit of Delegation 1946/7

3. In 1946/7 a delegation appointed by the Colonial Office and the National Institute for the Blind visited colonial territories in Africa and the Middle East, to report on the condition of the blind. At that time, the School for the Blind at Thika in Kenya, run by the Salvation Army with Government aid, was the only service to the blind as such. The delegation made extensive recommendations, covering the two distinct fields of welfare services to the blind and of measures for the reduction of blindness.

Founding of British Empire Society for the Blind

4. To act as the central body in developing and co-ordinating work for the blind throughout the British Colonial Empire, the British Empire Society for the Blind was established in January, 1950. The achievement of the Society and of its associate organisations in the three and a half years that have since elapsed has been eminently satisfactory. For purposes of economical administration, the Colonial Territories have been zoned—West Indian, West African, East African, Central African, Middle East and South-East Asian—and the general intention is to appoint an officer experienced in blind welfare to serve each zone as Regional Adviser. Simultaneously with this organisational development, new schools and training centres are being started, old ones extended, and surveys of blindness and research into its causes and prevention undertaken.

The East African Territories

5. In East Africa itself, Branch Committees of the British Empire Society for the Blind were set up in Kenya and Uganda and have been carrying out successful public appeals. Broad plans have been discussed between London and the Governments of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Agreements in principle have been arrived at in respect of the creation of a Regional Office. This was being very much urged in some quarters and regarded as premature in others. All four Territories agreed, however, that they would welcome my coming to East Africa to discuss many matters of detail on the spot and to bring a clear policy into being.

6. Inequalities in reactions are, of course, inevitable in the process of bringing agreement to a plan affecting four separate Territories, each with its own special circumstances and problems. There is also the factor that each country, with many claims on its limited governmental and philanthropic resources, can only make a special effort on behalf of one of its handicapped groups and this only when the opportune moment offers; and, of course, practical considerations make it impossible for such moments to synchronise throughout four Territories. At times these factors may seem to delay headway, but they are all part of the business of progress, the need to meet people's convenience and to reap the advantages of hastening slowly. Indeed, glancing back to 1950, the ground covered has been considerable. Independent of action by the British Empire Society for the Blind, a School for the Blind in Central Tanganyika was founded in 1950. Our Kenya Committee had plans well advanced in conjunction with the Government for the running of a mobile clinic to make a survey and give treatment. The Government of Uganda had made substantial grants to our Uganda Branch and promised its warm support in the future. Throughout the whole East African Territories plans were being discussed in the quarters concerned and the ground being prepared for action—all totalling up to very satisfactory headway.

SURVEY, RESEARCH AND PREVENTION

7. While ascertainment of the extent of blindness, research into eye diseases and the extension of all activities calculated to reduce their incidence are among the aims of the parent body, most opinion in East Africa regards this field as belonging more appropriately to the established medical services. The following is the present position in the three major Territories:—

Kenya

8. Our Kenya Committee has made excellent arrangements with Government (through the Director of Medical Services, Dr. T. Farnworth Anderson) for a mobile clinic to be conducted for two years by Dr. Calcott. The cost to the Committee will be about £8,000, while Medical Services are providing certain costs and African Staff. Dr. Calcott will visit every district to ascertain the causes and incidence of blindness, give whatever treatments are possible during his stay in each district, train assistants and make a simple social survey of the occupations and conditions of the blind as far as time permits. This survey will unquestionably yield much useful information which should be equally applicable to other parts of East Africa in which climate and tribal life and customs are similar. The Committee does not contemplate continuing this service when the initial two-year contract ends. Already a considerable amount of ophthalmic work goes on as a matter of routine under Dr. R. McKelvie, Government Ophthalmologist, in the wards of King George VI Hospital in Nairobi and in other hospitals and dispensaries. Excellent work has been done in recent years on onchocerciasis in the Kisumu District and this has already received considerable mention.

Tanganyika

9. Medical authorities in Tanganyika hold the view that broadly speaking matters of survey, research and prevention are best dealt with by Government. With an initial sum of £4,000 set aside by Government for the purpose, Dr. Ellis-Jones is about to establish an eye clinic in Dar es Salaam, train African assistants, make local surveys of available groups such as police, school children and prisoners, and provide a modern operating theatre, all of which will be valuable extensions of the ophthalmic service.

Uganda

10. In November, 1952, under the chairmanship of Mr. A. J. Boase, the Government Ophthalmologist, our Uganda Committee gave serious consideration to its future policy and decided that, apart from active propaganda on simple care of the eyes, etc., the field of prevention belonged more appropriately to the established

medical services. The Medical Department's activities in combating onchocerciasis in the vicinity of Ripon Falls and the rapids below is described in the Department's report for 1953. The Eastern Province of Uganda appears to have a higher incidence of eye disease and blindness than other Provinces, and it is satisfactory to note that the Department has recently appointed a full-time ophthalmologist to work there. This is a valuable extension of the ophthalmic work which has been going on for many years in the Government African Hospital at Mulago, Kampala.

Inter-territorial

11. Col. W. Laurie, Director of the East African Medical Survey and Filariasis Research, maintains close touch with most of the activities in East Africa concerned with survey, research into and prevention of blindness, and valuable information appears from time to time in the reports of his Research Centre. These reports describe studies made of many aspects of onchocerciasis and the progress achieved in its treatment and elimination; and also an account of indigenous treatments of eye conditions in the Lake Province of Tanganyika.

Incidence of Blindness

12. Research into specific ophthalmic problems which might lead to simpler methods of treatment or prevention are most desirable; but the writer holds the opinion that no further substantial sums of money should be set aside for surveys simply to ascertain the incidence of blindness. It has always proved extremely difficult to discover the real number of the blind in any community; and this has only been finally revealed when governments have provided monetary allowances on account of blindness. Census returns of blindness have proved completely unreliable, and one is usually on safe ground in doubling or trebling them.

13. From evidence already accumulated, it is safe to assume that the general incidence of blindness throughout East Africa may not be below about 0.5 per cent (1 in every 200 of population) or 90,000 in the total population of eighteen millions. The incidence in some areas may rise to 1 or even 2 per cent or be as low as 0.3 per cent. Even were 0.3 per cent the average incidence throughout the whole territory, the blind would still total 54,000, while, if we were to apply to East Africa only the incidence of England and Wales, we should still have some 31,000 blind to serve.

14. The fact remains, therefore, that on the welfare side, whatever the exact number of the blind may be, there is a big job to be done which will fully tax all foreseeable monetary resources for many years to come; and this is equally the case in the fields of

treatment and prevention. To know precise statistical figures will make no material difference to these situations.

TERRITORIAL REPORTS

15. My Reports on each of the four Territories followed no set plan. They were run off in draft while I was journeying in planes and trains and during odd hours between other activities. They were built up of records of meetings, memoranda on technical points, accounts of studies made of the existing life and activities of the blind in various districts visited and so on. A separate Report was submitted for each Territory; and on page 17 a summary is given of the main subjects discussed in each, especially as to the existing life of the African blind and how best, with this as a foundation, to build the training and settlement service.

Types of Blind Persons met

16. The Reports contain a word of caution against the temptation to follow the Western pattern of Braille literary education too closely, too extensively and too soon, advising instead the preservation of all that is good in the indigenous outlets for the blind and in the traditional provisions for their security. Among the African blind one finds all the types one met in the old days in Europe, ranging from the pitiful, slumped, helpless individual, who says he has never tried to do anything since his loss of sight, and he who says he has tried to work on his shamba and failed, to the upstanding man of character and confidence, who declares that he carries on his cultivating in the same way as when he could see, and finds no difficulty about it. An appreciable proportion of the African blind, without stimulus from outside, and despite all discouragements, have fought and mastered their handicap, and hold their own as cultivators, musicians, mat and basket makers, and, here and there, as a catechist, a bonesetter, a shopkeeper, or a curer of skins. Many blind women have gone on undeterred with their cooking and housework, attending too to their traditional duties as cultivators. Modern blind welfare service, if it is to flourish in Africa, must grow from this strong root.

Long-term and Short-term Policies

17. The Reports deal with long-term policy mainly in regard to the creation at this stage of an Inter-territorial body and its associated Territorial bodies, into which the various services which the different classes of blind people require can be fitted as the work grows and resources become available. While the proposed constitutions might appear unnecessarily substantial at the present time, it is sound policy to found the initial organisation in a form which gives it a good status from the start, and which will not need to be altered at a later period. To create at the outset a body with

adequate powers and capable in the long run of undertaking the full range of services, reduces the possibility of a situation arising which hindered for years the growth of effective service in many countries. This was the springing into being of many small, weak societies with the inevitable consequences of overlapping, bickerings and waste of effort and money.

18. In the practical field, the recommendations are chiefly short-term in character. They are concerned solely with the training, rehabilitation and settlement of the potentially employable blind, advising against embarking upon extensive academic education on the Western pattern, until the indigenous country outlets in these predominantly rural communities have been developed to the maximum. Should the temptations to give academic education take control of the situation, all available resources would soon be absorbed by a very small number of blind, often with unsatisfactory results, while large numbers of the simple blind in the country districts remained neglected. Social services to the elderly and unemployable blind should be left until a later stage.

19. I would suggest that this short-term policy be adhered to for, say, fifteen years, when it could be reconsidered in the light of further experience, prospects of greater resources and changed circumstances.

Blind of the Nomadic Tribes

20. I regret that my stay in East Africa was not sufficiently long to permit of my making a study of how the blind of the nomadic tribes live or employ themselves, and little is known of them. There is a general impression that the incidence of blindness is high amongst these peoples. They live chiefly in the more arid areas in which blindness is usually at a higher rate than in the wetter areas; and also there is little or nothing in the way of dispensaries or medical services which they could use, even if they were so disposed. The only nomadic blind person whom I met was a vigorous young man who said that he employed himself cleaning the kraal of dung and making rope. It is possible that it will be more difficult to find suitable outlets for the nomadic blind than for those of settled rural communities.

TERRITORIAL AND INTER-TERRITORIAL FRAMEWORK

Regional Adviser and Office

21. It had already been agreed between the four Territories that the headquarters of the Regional Office should be in Kampala. The Uganda Committee of the British Empire Society for the Blind (to become the Uganda Foundation for the Blind on being formally constituted) has undertaken the making of arrangements for office

and residence. Details of the costs for this office and of the proposed subventions from the contributing Governments have been circulated to Governments. The present position is that all four Governments have agreed to receive the proposals for submission to their Legislative Councils for consideration.

22. The Regional Adviser is under contract with the British Empire Society for the Blind, engaged to serve each Territory in the most equitable manner. Proposals as to what his functions should be, formulated after discussions with Governments and Committees, were forwarded to the British Empire Society in London for its approval (vide Appendix page 16).

23. As an initial step towards what may grow in years to come into an East African Council for the Blind, it is proposed that the chairman, hon. secretary or a nominated member of the executive council of each of the Foundations for the Blind should at any time constitute an East African Consultative Committee for the purpose of discussing and co-ordinating regional policy or other matters affecting the Regional Office.

24. The accounts of the Regional Office will be supervised by honorary trustees appointed in Kampala by the British Empire Society for the Blind. Separate accounts will be maintained for subventions received from Governments to meet recurring overhead expenses and for monies given for regional services to the blind. Into the latter account will be paid the monies received by way of a ten per cent part of the proceeds of initial appeals and other sums contributed for regional purposes.

Appointment of Mr. A. Mackay

25. The timing of the appointment of a Regional Adviser to East Africa was one of those things which the differing situations between one Territory and another made difficult. In view of the fact that readiness to consider the proposal had everywhere been given, that Uganda was pressing for the immediate services of an experienced adviser and that it was desirable that my own work here should be followed up with the minimum of delay, the Society in London appointed Mr. Alexander Mackay tentatively to this post. He arrived on August 26th in order to work with me in the field for four weeks, and from our combined experience to confirm our broad plans for the application of blind welfare principles to the specific background of Africa. His services will be available officially to each Territory upon its formal acceptance of the Regional Office; and in the meantime the London Office will be happy to lend his aid informally. Mr. Mackay has had valuable experience as an educationist, as Assistant Director, Army Welfare Service (Indian Troops) during the war, and since then as the Chief Welfare Officer of St. Dunstan's London, in the training and settlement of the British war-blinded.

AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIAL ORGANISATIONS

26. The aim of the British Empire Society for the Blind has been to stimulate the establishment of, not to control, services to the blind in the Colonial Territories. The Branch Committees in Kenya and Uganda were set up to conduct appeals and to pave the way for the creation of autonomous bodies. One of my duties has been to consult with the Committees and Governments as to the best ways and means of doing this, in the light of the circumstances and thoughts of each country.

Kenya and Uganda

27. The Kenya and Uganda Branches have severally decided that the names of their respective bodies shall be The Kenya Foundation for the Blind and The Uganda Foundation for the Blind. The Uganda Government is shortly submitting an ordinance to its Legislative Council constituting The Uganda Foundation for the Blind. If passed, this ordinance will create a statutory body which will be representative of both Government and the philanthropic public, the majority of the members of its executive council to be non-official. The Kenya Committee is in the process of drafting a parallel constitution for submission to its Government for consideration.

This constitution follows a pattern which has been remarkably successful in New Zealand for sixty years.

Tanganyika

28. The subject was fully discussed with members of the Tanganyika Government and with representatives of the voluntary societies, and is briefly outlined in the Tanganyika Report. The time for detailed consideration will come at the conclusion of the Appeal.

Zanzibar

29. Because of the relatively few blind in Zanzibar, it is not proposed at the present time to set up such a body there but probably a special committee of the existing Voluntary Social Welfare Committee will be nominated to act in this field.

SUMMARY

30. It will be seen, therefore, that East Africa is well on the way towards what is in essence a compact and a practical organisation for the blind.

(i) It is planned that each of the four Territories should have its autonomous body in charge of its territorial work.

(ii) Provision is made for a simple Regional Consultative Committee to be convened or consulted by correspondence at any time that this is thought necessary.

(iii) A Regional Adviser is provided by the British Empire Society for the Blind, whose services will be available to all four Territories and the financing of whose office is under consideration by the member Governments.

(iv) Within this framework it should be practicable to arrange for services of a regional character (Braille printing for example) to be carried out on an economical regional basis.

(v) No rigid system of affiliation is set down, but it is the hope of the British Empire Society for the Blind that each Territorial body will work in friendly affiliation with the others and with the Society in London.

31. In a formal report one must confine oneself to the factual situation. Informally, however, I think I am justified in saying that the prospects of these plans crystallising into practical form in the near future seem excellent; and I need hardly add that I heartily commend this course.

Acknowledgments

32. The Council of the British Empire Society for the Blind and I are warmly grateful to the many people and organisations in East Africa who have done so much to facilitate our work, to make my task here easy and pleasant and to minimise the costs of my visit to the Society. The Governments and their officers, the members of our Committees and many others have shown me unbounded hospitality and kindness; and I shall not easily forget my happy months in East Africa. Mr. Mackay, my permanent successor, has before him a task of unending interest to be carried out in the company of congenial fellow-workers.

The Approximate Functions of the Society's East African Adviser

1. On behalf of the British Empire Society for the Blind, he will advise the Government and the responsible blind welfare organisations of each of the four East African Territories.
2. He will take special care to distribute his services as equitably as possible between the four contributing Territories.
3. He will do all in his power in co-operation with Government and unofficial bodies to stimulate the development of services to the blind.
4. He will help as desired in major appeal work.
5. He will study the existing social life of the blind and the occupations they follow, in order that training plans may be so organised that the maximum association between the blind and their own families and communities may be maintained, and that the periods and costs of training may be kept at the minimum.
6. He will investigate the potential outlets for the employment of the urbanised and detribalised blind, and advise accordingly on the best methods for their training and settlement.
7. He will organise such special activities as are best carried out on a regional basis (for example, Braille printing, the training of teachers and instructors and, at a later stage, the organising of training in special vocations such as physiotherapy, telephone switchboard operating or shorthand/typing).

It is suggested that the Chairman, Honorary Secretary or a nominated member of the Executive Council of each of the Foundations for the Blind in East Africa, should at any time constitute an East African Territorial Committee for the purpose of discussing and co-ordinating regional policy or other matters affecting the Regional Office.

II. Digest of Sir Clutha Mackenzie's Territorial Reports

TERMS OF REFERENCE

33. At its General Purposes Committee on March 6th, 1953, the British Empire Society for the Blind requested Sir Clutha Mackenzie on his visit to the four East African Territories, to carry out the following assignment:—

(a) To assist the Society's Uganda Branch to implement its programme, and to advise the Branch on the future development of its work.

(b) In consultation with the East Africa High Commission, the Territorial Governments and the unofficial Committees concerned, to make detailed arrangements which will enable the Society to proceed with the minimum of delay, to establish an East African Regional Office, with its headquarters at Kampala.

(c) To advise the newly formed Tanganyika Committee on its Appeal Campaign, and to give such technical assistance as may be required by the Society's Kenya Branch and the Zanzibar Voluntary Social Welfare Society.

(d) To advise the Society broadly on the means by which it can most effectively collaborate with the Governments and unofficial Committees concerned, in the development of work for the blind and for the prevention of blindness in East Africa.

GENERAL PROCEDURE

34. During his tour, Sir Clutha Mackenzie adopted the following general procedure:—

Consultations and interviews with leading Government officials. He was given the opportunity of seeing H.E. the Governor of Kenya, Sir Evelyn Baring, H.E. the Governor of Tanganyika, Sir Edward Twining, H.E. the Governor of Uganda, Sir Andrew Cohen, and H.E. The British Resident of Zanzibar. He also met Provincial and District Commissioners, medical officers, educationists, social workers, representatives of missionary organisations, and a number of influential members of the local communities, including Paramount and local Chiefs. In these interviews, he made many enquiries as to local conditions, and answered a number of questions relative to the policy of the British Empire Society for the Blind.

35. He refers in the final paragraph of the Inter-territorial Report to the help he received from many sources, but it may be fitting here to add that in each individual report of areas visited, Sir Clutha repeatedly acknowledges his indebtedness for the kindness which expressed itself in generous hospitality, in tireless efforts to make travelling conditions as comfortable as possible, and, most of all, in warm concern for the future of the African blind. The Chairman and Committee of the British Empire Society are deeply grateful to the many people through whose help the tour brought such solid practical results.

36. *Interviews with blind Africans in each area visited.* In this connection Sir Clutha, in consultation with Mr. H. P. Calder, Hon. Secretary of the Uganda Branch of the British Empire Society for the Blind, drafted a simple form for the collection of initial information in the field, and used this form subsequently in his investigations.

37. *A study of the occupations for the blind offered locally,* together with some investigations of indigenous materials suitable for crafts.

38. *Talks to groups of persons who later might further the welfare of the blind.* Such talks were given to students in teacher-training centres, to senior scholars in secondary schools and to groups of representative Europeans, Indians and Africans. Demonstrations of apparatus always aroused great interest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

39. Details of the recommendations made are given under their respective Territories, and fall under five main headings:—

(a) *Shamba cultivation.** In all Territories, Sir Clutha found that the cultivation of shambas was work to which the blind of settled agricultural communities, both men and women, had normally been accustomed before blindness ensued, and that the more enterprising had continued this work after loss of sight. The value of this "carrying over" into blindness of work done under earlier normal conditions has been amply proved in other countries, and has special value in that it entails no break with the community and family to which the blind person belongs. Recommendations were therefore made along these lines. (See pages 21 and 23.)

* *Shamba.* A Swahili word denoting "plantation, estate, farm, garden, plot of cultivated land." It may be of any extent, though in the case of African peasant cultivators, it is limited by what the holder can effectively cultivate.

(b) *Over-emphasis on literacy to be avoided.* While Sir Clutha expresses appreciation of the pioneer work done at the School for the Blind, Thika (Kenya), and Buigiri (Tanganyika), from his experience of other pioneering schools faced with similar problems to theirs, he gives a warning against the danger of over-emphasising literacy at the expense of preparation for self-supporting life in village conditions.

(c) *The desirability of encouraging blind women and girls to continue their household duties.*

(d) *Provision of training and work for the detribalised and urban blind.*

(e) *Higher vocations.* Training for such vocations as physiotherapy, telephone and shorthand typing to be given only to newly blinded educated young adults, who already have had experience of life as school teachers, university students, etc. Such training to be given only where the vocation in question has been thoroughly explored and found satisfactory.

UGANDA

Constitution of Uganda Organisation

40. It has always been the Society's intention that at some stage its overseas Branches should become autonomous bodies, working independently of, but affiliated to, the parent Society. That stage has already been reached in Uganda, where it has been agreed that the Branch shall be incorporated (under the name of the Uganda Foundation for the Blind) as the comprehensive blind welfare organisation for the Territory. A draft ordinance, to give effect of this intention, will shortly be submitted to the Legislature.

Arrangements for Sir Clutha Mackenzie's Tour

41. The arrangements for Sir Clutha Mackenzie's tour were made by the Society's Uganda Branch, in consultation with the Government of Uganda. Between May 11th and July 9th, he visited the following districts: Ancholi, Ankole, Bunyoro, Busoga, Kigezi, Lango, Masaka, Mbale, Teso and Toro.

Later, between August 31st and September 4th, following his tour of the other East African Territories, he visited parts of Buganda, accompanied by Mr. Alexander Mackay, our recently appointed Regional Adviser to the four East African Territories.

Interviews with Blind Persons

42. During this tour he came into contact with over 600 blind persons and took details of 258 (166 male, 92 female) of them. The following figures are taken from a more detailed table given in his Report, and show the age groups:—

Age	0 to	5 years	...	...	9
„	6 „	10 „	...	...	24
„	11 „	15 „	...	...	32
„	16 „	20 „	...	...	23
„	21 „	40 „	...	...	102
„	over	40 „	...	...	64
„	unknown	...	...	...	4
Total					258

Types of Persons Interviewed

43. Reporting to the Executive Committee of the Uganda Society for the Blind on the persons seen, Sir Clutha divided them into four classes:—

(i) *The Unemployable*. Mainly elderly or suffering from some handicap additional to blindness, but with a “hard core”, of all ages and both sexes, whom long idleness had made inert.

(ii) *The Employed*. Outstanding among this group were blind women of the East and Northern provinces, able to carry on normal household duties, often in addition to shamba cultivation or the making of simple domestic pottery.

(iii) *Potential trainees*. Youths and young adults suitable for training.

(iv) *Children*. So few in number as to suggest incomplete ascertainment.

Occupations Followed by the Blind

44. Some of the occupations recorded were unusual. They included a curer of hides, two bone-setters, and some small traders, selling maize, fish, beer, groundnuts, tea. The curer of hides (aged 50), totally blind for 31 years, was self-taught. Another, not seen personally but described by his chief, was said to “remove fat and other remnants by rubbing with stone, working up with his hands and further rubbing to make the leather soft like chamois.” The occupation was new to Sir Clutha, and one that he thought might offer possibilities.

Of the more familiar trades and occupations, the following were commented upon:—

Basketry. This was followed by many of those interviewed. Useful information on indigenous materials for baskets, basket furniture and mats was obtained in Kigezi District from the Forestry Officer.

Playing of musical instruments. Three men were reported as supporting themselves by playing at weddings, funerals, tribal dances and as village entertainers, and for six others such playing was given as a subsidiary occupation. In his Buganda tour, Sir Clutha met a blind madinda player (the instrument is akin to the xylophone) capable of putting the instrument together, tuning it, improving resonance if necessary, and playing the melody, accompanied by three other players with a limited range of 4—5 notes. "The blind man appeared to be a master of the instrument and well qualified to be employed as a teacher."

Mat-making. One totally blind maker of rope and papyrus mats "gathers papyrus from a swamp near his house, cultivates his land, digging and preparing the seed-bed, sells his wares, carrying them to market-places alone, often many miles . . . He is a magnificent example of independence achieved against heavy odds."

Rope-making. A man engaged in making tethering-ropes cultivates and prepares sisal, markets his goods, and, as a side-line, buys and sells meat in the local market. Another "grows his own sisal and demonstrated the means whereby he scraped the leaf . . . and also the simple method by which he simultaneously twisted and plaited the three- or four-ply rope. He learned his trade by a few lessons the brother gave him when he was aged 12. He also cultivates on the shamba and says he can weed millet. Because of the likeness of young millet to grass, this latter is not easy."

Shamba Cultivation

45. The investigations made in Uganda, and confirmed by his tours of Kenya, Tanganyika and Zanzibar, led Sir Clutha to the conclusion that perhaps the most promising outlet for the average blind adult lies in the cultivation of the shambas of anything from one to ten acres. On them is grown the banana, which forms an important item in the diet of many African villagers. Coffee, millet, maize, cotton, sweet potatoes and other crops are also cultivated. The shamba includes a hut and sometimes an additional smaller hut for the aged parents or married son.

Shamba Cultivators Interviewed

46. The following extracts describe some of the shamba cultivators whom he met:—

“ A totally blind man of about 50, who lost his sight six years ago cultivated his shamba before loss of sight, and now continues.” (Acholi District.)

“ I met one man and heard of another who, having lost their sight, continue to cultivate their shambas.” (Masaka District.)

“ It seemed almost traditional that a blind woman carried on her ordinary duties as a married woman on a shamba.” (Busoga District.)

“ A blind man (30) cultivates his banana shamba and gathers his crop. Another runs his shamba, harvests his coffee, and distinguishes ripe from unripe beans by touch.” (Mbale District.)

Shamba Training Centre

47. The fact that shamba cultivation is accepted as within the capacity of blind adults of reasonable intelligence and enterprise encouraged Sir Clutha in the view that some form of shamba training could usefully be arranged, and he has recommended that a Shamba Training Centre be set up. Here courses could be given to encourage the newly blind adult to continue shamba life, with the help, if necessary, of certain improvisations, such as a guiding rope to enable him to keep his direction when cultivating or harvesting the crop. It might even be possible to make some small improvements in the traditional methods of cultivation, always provided that care be taken not to go beyond the capacity of the worker. Sir Clutha continues: “ A typical shamba might be taken for the purpose of this centre and limited accommodation added. It should adhere to shamba type of accommodation, food and atmosphere, and keep clear of Braille and anything else likely to upset the traditional way of life.”

48. During his tour of Buganda, Sir Clutha and Mr. Mackay gave particular attention to the question of shamba training, interviewing two blind cultivators: “ Most of the blind with whom we talked were men. They ranged in type from the pitiful, slumped, helpless individual who said he had never tried to do anything since his loss of sight . . . to the upstanding man of character and confidence who declared that he carried on his cultivating in the same way he had done when he could see and found no difficulty about it. We visited the shamba of one of the latter type . . . He showed us some new ground he had broken in from the rough and had planted in young matoke (banana). I asked him to get his hoe

and to show us how he dug his rough ground and this he did most effectively . . . Another man whom we met later, said he experienced no difficulty over any operation. He seemed to be the type who would make an excellent blind foreman and demonstrator . . . Mr. Mackay and I walked over a number of shambas with our hosts, inspecting in detail the various crops, to assess which operations in preparing the ground, planting seed or cuttings, thinning, weeding, pruning and harvesting could, or could not, be done by the trained blind. We concluded that there was very little indeed which would be beyond their capacity."

49. Following on Sir Clutha's recommendations, the Government through the Advisory Council on Technical Education and Training, has made a grant of £4,000 to assist the scheme. The Director of Agriculture, Uganda, and his senior officer in the provinces are co-operating, and are prepared to second a trained African Assistant Agricultural Instructor in each of the shamba schemes to assist in the early stages, and to remain in charge until an African Instructor, appointed and paid by the Uganda Foundation for the Blind, is capable of running the scheme on his own. Each shamba will have twelve blind students, and accommodation, clothing, food, tools, etc., will be supplied by the Uganda Foundation. The Training Shamba will cover about ten acres, and the students will remain for about 12 months, a period long enough to complete the cycle from planting to cropping. The scheme should be in operation early next year near Kampala, and the ultimate aim is to have a Training Shamba in every district where circumstances warrant it.

Vocational Training Centre

50. While the proposed shamba training should provide for the needs of the blind village African, the establishment of a vocational Training Centre near Kampala as planned by the Uganda Society for the Blind will be required to serve the urban and detribalised young blind adult, and to prepare him for manual employment. A site has been acquired, and it is hoped that the centre will be ready by 1954.

Women and Girls

51. In a number of his district reports, especially those dealing with the East and Northern Provinces of Uganda, Sir Clutha comments favourably on the activity of the blind women, who normally appeared to him more energetic than the men; of 39 women in the

16—50 age group, only three were idle. “ It is extremely satisfactory to find that such a high proportion enjoy a life so closely akin to that of their sighted sisters . . . In no other country within my experience where no extensive blind welfare service exists, do blind women occupy such a relatively equal status with the sighted and such a normal marital life.” (Lango District.) In view of this, he holds that active domestic life should be encouraged among women and girls, in order that the primary aim of blind welfare, an active useful life for the blind person within the community, be assured for them. Just as shamba operations appear the best occupation for most blind men, women’s duties on the shamba probably offer the best life for the younger women and girls. It may be at some future date that exceptional blind girls will be found suitable for training in one of the more academic occupations, but at present home duties seem to afford them their best outlet, unless the home background and influence is unsatisfactory; in such cases the alternative of admission to a school for the blind may have to be considered, though it must always be borne in mind that the education of girls in Uganda lags behind that of boys. “ The education of blind girls should not be carried too fast, and too far in advance of that for sighted girls; their future happiness and usefulness should be the criterion. Present social conditions too are unfavourable to single blind women attempting to live in urban areas apart from their families.”

Home Visiting

52. Periodical home visiting by a representative of such an organisation as the Uganda Society for the Blind, whereby blind women and girls in their homes could be supervised and simple training be given them in household duties and infant care, might usefully be considered, where circumstances are favourable, and road access possible. Parents of blind children too greatly require advice on the need to bring them up normally and actively.

KENYA

Sir Clutha Mackenzie visited Kenya from July 20th to 28th, and again from August 20th to 21st.

Meeting at Government House

53. A meeting was held at Government House on July 22nd, when H.E. The Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, presided. Those present included the Member for Health, the Director of Medical Services and the Chairman and Hon. Secretary of the Kenya Committee of the British Empire Society for the Blind.

54. At this meeting, it was agreed in principle that the Society's Kenya Branch should be incorporated under legislative ordinance as the autonomous and comprehensive blind welfare organisation for the Territory, and be known as The Kenya Foundation for the Blind.

The relationship between the new Foundation and any organisation in the Territory responsible for specific services to the blind will have to be worked out in detail, the basic principle being that the Foundation (representing both the Government and the general public) should be in a position effectively to co-ordinate all the work for the blind in the Territory.

The functions of the Regional Adviser on Blind Welfare were considered and the cost of the Regional Offices was estimated. (See Appendix, page 16.)

Long-Term Programme

55. At a further meeting between members of the Government and representatives of the Kenya Committee of the British Empire Society for the Blind, held on August 21st, a long-term programme of blind welfare was considered, and attention given to the relative shares to be taken by the Government and the Committee in financing blind welfare services.

56. In relation to the general programme of blind welfare, the following matters received special consideration:—

Shamba Training

(i) The proposal that Shamba Training Units should be set up in Kenya was discussed and generally approved. It was thought possible that one such unit might be established under the aegis of the Salvation Army at its agricultural centre in the Nyanza area, but in order that the trainees need not move too far from their own districts, several centres would be needed.

Urban and Detribalised Blind

(ii) Trade training should be provided for the urban and detribalised blind, and be recruited from pupils leaving school at the age of 15 (whether or not they have completed primary education), and for newly blinded persons between the ages of 16 and 30 or 35 years.

(iii) A factory, employing perhaps 100 blind workers, might be set up in Nairobi, to accommodate the trained urbanised or detribalised blind in such trades as basketry, brush-ware and coconut fibre products.

Thika School for the Blind

57. Sir Clutha Mackenzie reported to the meeting on his visit to the Salvation Army School for the Blind at Thika from July 26th to 28th, when he had inspected all departments of the school and had an opportunity of meeting its Advisory Board, and discussing the future of the school with them. The school, opened on very modest lines in 1942, had since 1946 received substantial Government aid, the Education Department meeting annual running costs, as well as co-operating with generous private donors in the purchase of site and erection of permanent stone buildings.

Sir Clutha stated that the school was encountering the usual difficulties met with "by an isolated unit pioneering blind welfare in a new environment." He paid tribute to the enterprise of the Salvation Army in its inauguration of the work of educating the young blind African, and said that such comments as he made in no way minimised his appreciation of what had been done.

After-care of Pupils

58. The School's official Reports for 1951 and 1952 had commented upon the difficulty of arranging for the after-care of its pupils: "There is a definite need for assistance to keep them at the job to which they have gone, to see that they are not meeting with too much difficulty in obtaining materials, and what is more important, to see that they are really getting down to a job of work." Sir Clutha commenting upon this, pointed out that the provision of after-care cannot be regarded as a normal part of the duty of the school staff, but stated that the Advisory Board had under consideration plans for "bringing into being a settlement and after-care organisation."

Curriculum

With regard to the curriculum, he had the following comments to make:—

59. Boys are admitted at the age of 15 years. A thorough Braille training and education with Swahili Braille as its medium would take a minimum of six years, so could not be completed before the age of 21, and this is not practicable. Further, much time is now devoted to the teaching of English, which is of little service to the manual worker, or to those who live on a shamba.

60. Owing to the large amount of time devoted to literary education, only a limited number of weekly periods for handicrafts are possible, "and not as serious continuous instruction and work." The result is that the pupils return to their communities without sufficient grounding. "If the blind are to compete with sighted

labour . . . they must have essential training," and this can only be achieved if the amount of time given to Braille and English is drastically curtailed.

Recommendations for Future Policy

61. It may be possible that at some future date (probably not for at least ten years) Thika will add a secondary department to its primary school, but for the present it is recommended that it should proceed along the following lines:—

(i) Provision of primary education, the pupils being admitted if possible at the age of six, and being retained in the school not later than their 15th birthday.

(ii) Provision of training for shamba occupations or manual trades, for those over 15. Village boys should be transferred to a Shamba Training Centre as soon as one is available, and then settled on their own shamba at home. Boys who have come from urban surroundings and who have no satisfactory shambas to which to return, should receive concentrated training in manual trades for a minimum of six hours daily under fully qualified instructors, in order that they may gain speed and quality, "ultimately becoming confident masters of their trades, ready to meet the rough world outside and the competition of sighted workers."

(iii) Training for clerical and semi-professional occupations of newly blind adults of superior education and some knowledge of the world before loss of sight, may have to be considered in exceptional cases.

TANGANYIKA

62. Sir Clutha Mackenzie visited Tanganyika from August 5th to August 19th. In addition to interviews and discussions of future plans, he addressed a meeting of the Rotary Club in Dar es Salaam.

Church Army School, Buigiri

63. Accompanied by the Bishop of Central Tanganyika, Sir Clutha visited the school at Buigiri, founded in 1950, largely through the personal initiative of Captain Varley of the Church Army, who with his wife, is in charge of the school. The buildings and grounds are the property of the diocese, and the school is financed by grants from the Government, African Local Governments (the fact that this grant has recently been doubled is evidence of the confidence of Africans in the work done), the Church Army

and private donors. Occasional gifts of equipment have been received from America. Buildings are simple, and the school economically run. Present accommodation is for 24 boys, but plans have been drafted for its expansion to accommodate up to 120 pupils and a beginning has been made. The age of entry is between 9 and 15, with an average age of admission of 10 plus.

Curriculum

64. Good training is given in English and the vernacular, with Braille reading and writing and general knowledge. Handwork is good, and indigenous materials used.

Recommendations

65. While commending the work done, Sir Clutha once again stresses the dangers of a too heavily-weighted literary education for the boys destined to return to simple tribal life. He points out that the happy competition in a sheltered environment with its attendant progress in Braille, English and typewriting, has its dangers, and may be followed by disillusionment when the pupils go out into a world where they cannot put their academic education to practical use, and something of a gulf has opened between them and their simple communities. "The tragedy which has befallen a number of the academically educated blind in Asian countries is that, unequipped for the hard struggle against heavy odds in unsympathetic environments, they have been forced to take to begging." The difficulties and dangers are specially apparent in a country with probably about 15,000 potentially trainable blind, and with no prospect of adequate funds to train more than a very small number of them, even in manual occupations—far less to give academic training, unless in exceptional cases. Sir Clutha recommends:

66. (i) The maintenance of a primary department for pupils between 6 and 15, with emphasis on handwork, physical training and domestic activities.

(ii) Training in shamba operations after 15, plus the traditional crafts of the trainees' communities, with a view to the trainees returning if possible to their villages. Where home conditions are unsuitable for them to return, the establishment of the trained workers in small country centres as skilled craftsmen, provided a supply of raw materials and market for the finished wares is assured.

(iii) A proportion of the potentially employable blind who have been urbanised, after sound manual training could find employment in Dar es Salaam, in a "well-managed industrial workshop of 100 blind employees manufacturing wares of good design and quality to meet the needs of the local market." Such a workshop would

have a training department attached to it, where training would be given either for permanent employment in the workshop or for independent craftsmanship in suitable towns and villages.

Medicancy in Tanganyika

67. During his tour in Tanganyika, Sir Clutha addressed the Tabora Cultural Association, discussing questions relating to blindness with African and Indian members of the audience. The African Salvation Army Captain of a Home for Elderly Men was present and stated that ten of the 34 men in the Home were blind beggars. Blind women begged in Tabora two days weekly. Commenting on the trend towards begging in Tabora and elsewhere in East Africa, Sir Clutha suggests that the tradition of family responsibility for its weaker members may be lessening, and it seems desirable that a service to the blind in the Territory should be started if only to prevent the growth and the public reproach of the beggar system. In Dodoma, he interviewed six blind beggars.

ZANZIBAR

Sir Clutha Mackenzie visited Zanzibar from July 29th to August 5th.

Statistics of Blindness

68. These, prepared in 1946, showed 343 blind in Zanzibar and 148 in Pemba; the figures are almost certainly incomplete though, owing to better climatic conditions and more varied diet, the incidence of blindness may be less than on the mainland.

Education

69. Having regard to the fact that the attendance at a school for the blind is unlikely in the case of girls, it would appear that the maximum number likely to attend at present is eighteen. Any school would have to be residential. Three factors must be borne in mind:—

(a) Rural nature (approximately 80 per cent) of the population.

(b) Importance of conserving family and community responsibility.

(c) Fact that already the blind have created for themselves some traditional occupations. Amongst those seen by Sir Clutha, or reported to him, were cultivating, domestic and shamba duties, carrying out simple operations in connection with the growing of coconuts and cloves, and the making of mats and baskets.

Training and Employment

70. The recommendations in the other East African Territories are repeated in substance for Zanzibar, though no long-term plans can yet be made.

Interim Policy

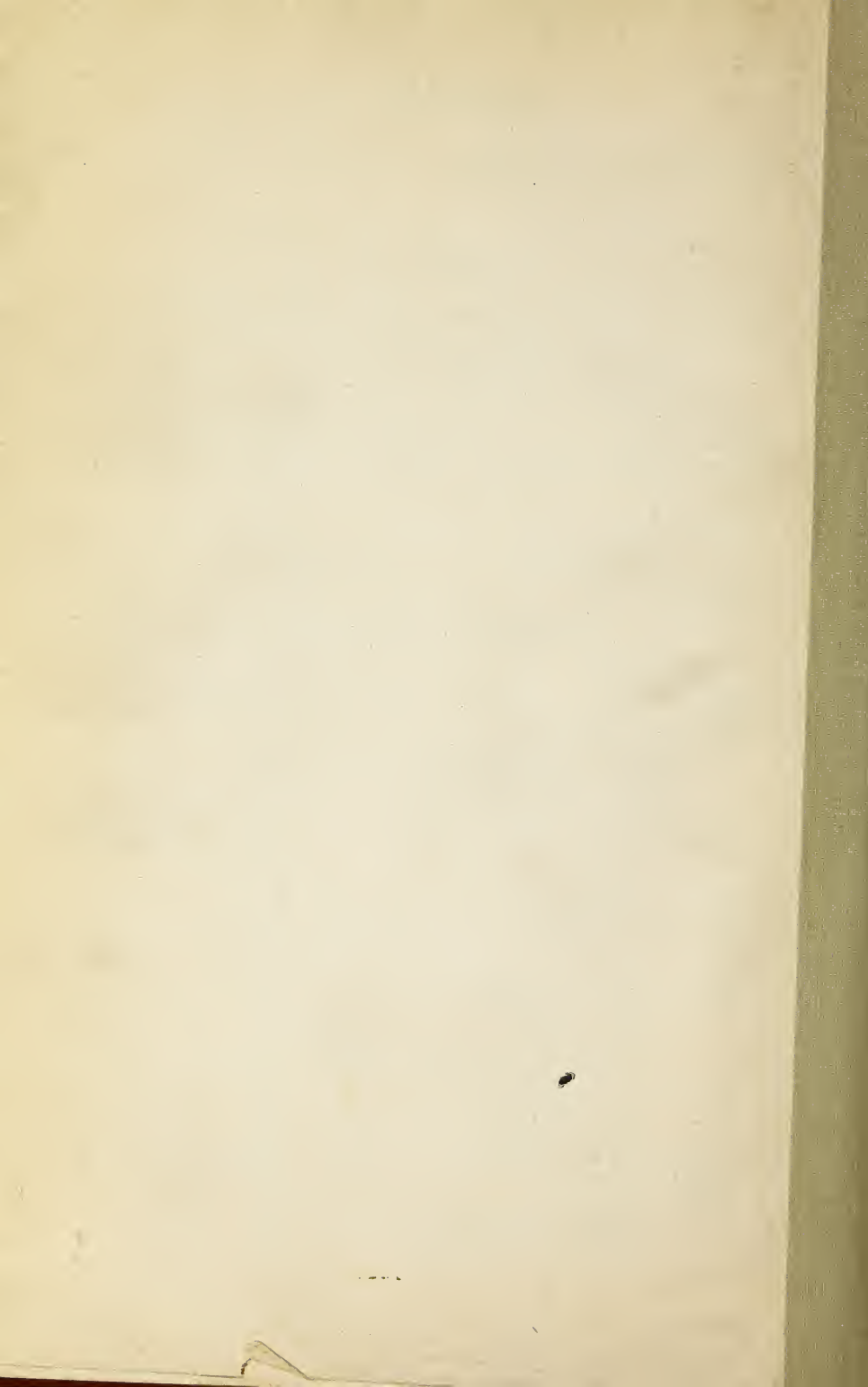
71. Until circumstances favour the creation of a more substantial organisation, Sir Clutha recommends that a Blind Welfare Sub-Committee of the Zanzibar Voluntary Social Welfare Committee shall proceed with the registration of the employed and employable blind, that parents with blind children shall be encouraged to bring them up on normal self-reliant lines, that the activities of the able-bodied adults about home and shamba shall be stimulated, and that close contact with the East African Regional Adviser shall be maintained.

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